Movies that dramatize a pandemic of zombies are well-known for involving a high level of symbolic elements. In them, the fictional figure of the zombie refers to a human body reduced to its animal (cannibalistic) function. It is understood that if we want to see these narratives for the way they influence our imaginary, we have to consider that the figure of the zombie exists only through the subjectivity of a non-zombie human, and that these rampant hordes of zombie bodies (which are something that this non-zombie is not) chasing the non-zombies are the reflection of a strong paranoia towards a specific group of people.

In an article entitled “World Revolution Z” (Space and Politics, December 5, 2012), Gastón Gordillo advances the hypothesis that in the case of Marc Forster’s film World War Z (2013), the zombies represent the insurrectional proletariat engaged in a worldwide revolution. Such an interpretation becomes extremely plausible when we see the strongest image of the film: a mass of bodies climbing on each other to get over a tall concrete wall in Jerusalem. The film crew was careful to explicitly describe that the wall had been built specifically against the zombie attack — in other words, this is not the separation barrier built in the West Bank by the Israeli government — and to include a scene in which Arabs and Jews seem to be collaborators when facing the universal danger.
set upon them. In other words, these zombies are not the Palestinians who are trying to liberate themselves from this wall that separate them from their family, their fields, and their roots. I will not mention the sum of details that do bring us back to a Zionist perspective — the very fact that the whole city of Jerusalem is said to be in Israel is the most obvious one — to rather focus on the fact that the symbolic aspect of this image cannot liberate itself from the way we see it, with our experience and cultural references: this wall is the separation barrier and these bodies are the Palestinians fighting against their restriction of movement.

The film ‘offers’ us a multitude of scenes in which these unarmed bodies, that are said to be zombies — the shots are so quickly strung together that it is impossible to recognize zombies from ‘sane’ bodies — are being killed in the hundreds by various machine guns, grenades, axes, bombs etc. The end of the film itself describes a war where zombies are not able to perceive the ‘sane’ bodies; they are thus methodically killed one by one and piled up on gigantic mounds of bodies while the calm voice of the main character explains that “the enemy” has to be exterminated. I would like to insist on the fact that, despite the film’s narrative that non-humans are destroying humans, our imaginary necessarily perceives the images we see as humans systematically killing other humans. This remark is essential as no group of people ever commits any form of genocide without a preliminary construction of a sub-human subjectivity that is imposed upon this group of people to be annihilated. In other words, humans can only be systematically killed if they have been previously stripped in some fashion off their human status at a legal and/or imaginary level. The Holocaust itself is the conclusion of several decades of an anti-Semitic narratives that ‘legitimized’ — or, at the very least, made tolerable — the deportation of millions of Jewish people (along with groups of homosexuals,
handicapped, gypsies and communists) and their industrial extermination.

What then is the status of the zombie? The word itself comes from Haitian creole; it describes the status of a dead slave — before the 1791 independence war against the French — whose soul was prevented from going back to *lan guinée* (i.e. Africa/Heaven). We can therefore interpret the zombie as the figure of the body that remains colonized even after its death. Such status can be shared by the various soldiers of human history that have been deliberately killed in such a way that they are prevented from going to heaven or its equivalent in the precepts of their various religions.

The zombie is also a human that has lost its legal status, including the one guaranteeing the status of the marker ‘human’ itself. It can therefore be killed without legal repercussions, and the various narratives involving it even promote the systematization of such killing. The status of zombie might be acquired in an objective manner — that is what the pandemic is about — however, their perception by the non-zombie (this idea that they are chasing them) is strictly subjective and constructs a scenario in which the killing is acceptable. In the case of *World War Z*, what would be interesting to see is the same plot from the point of view of a zombie. What we might then see through this other subjectivity is the methodical and horrifying massacre of humans, whose only crime was to have been contaminated, whether this contamination is health-related as in Michel Foucault’s *History of Madness* or ideologically as in Gastón Gordillo’s hypothesis.

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